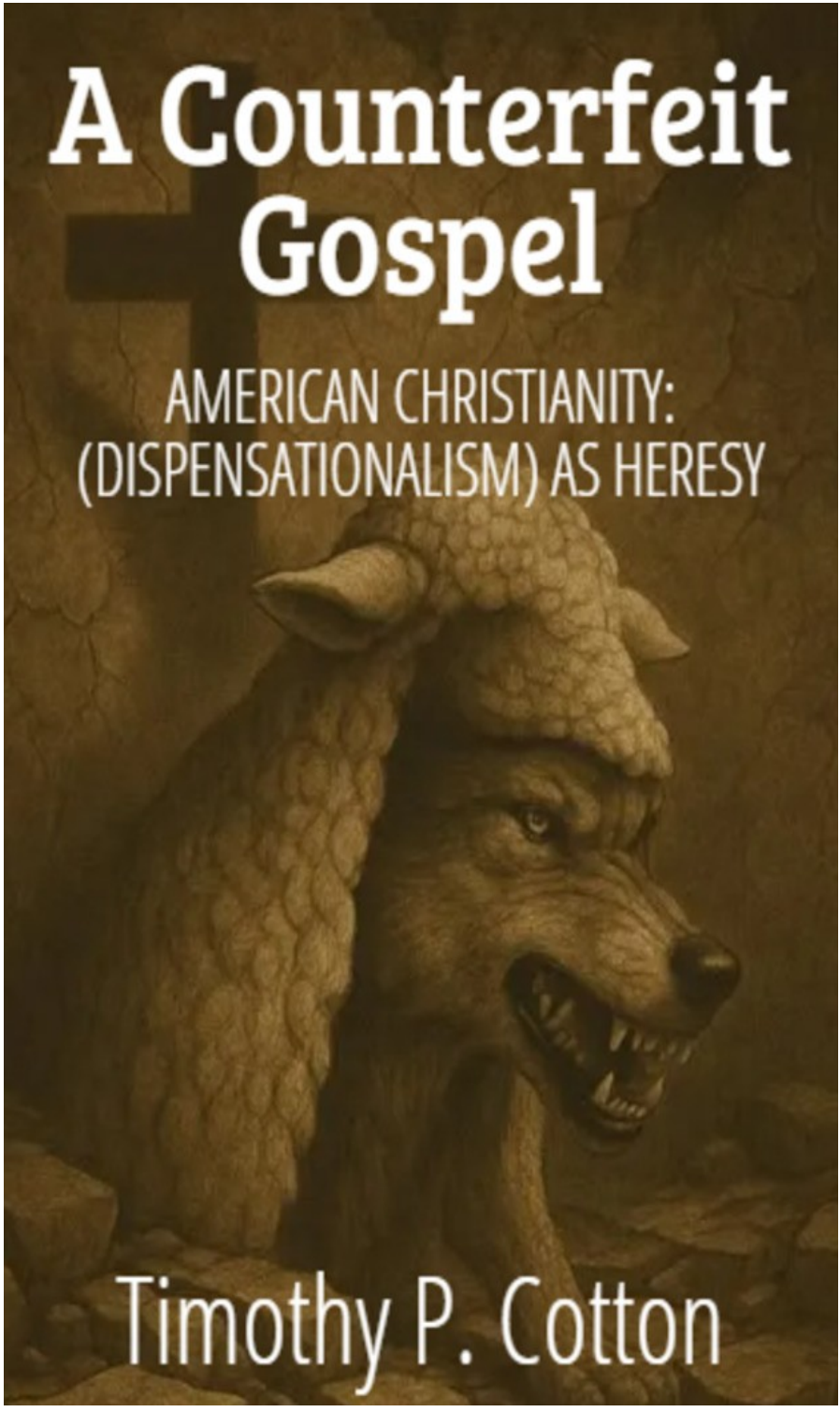
A Counterfeit Gospel
AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY: (DISPENSATIONALISM) AS HERESY
Timothy P. Cotton

A Counterfeit Gospel:

American Christianity (Dispensationalism) as Heresy and the Rise of a Parallel Religion

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1. Introduction: More Than a Theological Disagreement

For many in the modern evangelical world, Dispensationalism is simply assumed—a harmless interpretive framework for understanding the Bible's chronology, Israel's role in prophecy, and the return of Christ. Yet the theological architecture of Dispensationalism is not a mere variation on Christian doctrine; it constitutes a radically different religion altogether. It reconfigures the identity of God's people, introduces a dualistic plan of salvation, and replaces the crucified Christ with a triumphant nationalistic vision of divine power. Though it borrows Christian language, symbols, and texts, Dispensationalism reorients them around a different center: not the cross, but the nation; not Christ's suffering, but political conquest; not one people of God, but two destinies.

In the early church, such distortions were not treated as secondary disagreements. They were named for what they were—**heresies**—because they undermined the gospel itself. The church did not fear diversity of thought or open theological exploration, but it drew clear lines around teachings that compromised the revelation of God in Jesus Christ or fractured the unity of God's people. Heresy was not defined merely by error but by substitution: where something other than Christ became the center of faith, salvation, or

history.

This paper argues that Dispensationalism, far from being a branch of Christianity, is a theological system that **mimics the form of the faith while denying its substance**. It trades the gospel of peace for a program of divine violence. It divides the body of Christ into ethnic categories God has abolished. It replaces the universal mission of the church with a political alliance with modern Israel. And in doing so, it creates a parallel religion—**a pseudo-Christianity baptized in nationalism and prophecy charts**—which must be recognized for what it is: a heresy in the classical and theological sense.

As we will see, this is not simply a matter of doctrinal nuance. The consequences of this system are playing out in geopolitics, in uncritical support for violence, in the silencing of Palestinian Christians, and in a church that has forgotten how to bear the cross. The gospel of Jesus Christ—crucified, risen, and reigning—not only challenges Dispensationalism's theological claims but exposes them as false gospels: systems of power disguised as hope.

In what follows, we'll examine the historical definition of heresy, trace the core theological claims of Dispensationalism, and contrast them

with the apostolic gospel as preserved in Scripture and affirmed by the historic church. We will call on the theological insights of Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann, who, in the wake of the devastation of empire and war, saw clearly how Christianity must reject all nationalistic and dualistic distortions. Finally, we will name Dispensationalism not simply as a mistaken theology, but as **a rival religion masquerading as Christianity**—a modern heresy that demands a clear and courageous theological response.

2. What Is Heresy? A Historical-Theological Framework

To understand why Dispensationalism qualifies not simply as an error, but as a **heresy**, we must first recover the meaning of that term in its historical and theological context. In the modern imagination, "heresy" often evokes images of dogmatic rigidity or authoritarian control. But in the early church, heresy was not a label thrown at minor disagreements—it was a **designation for teachings that compromised the gospel at its core**, altering the message of who God is, what salvation entails, and what it means to be the people of God.

The Greek word *hairesis* (αἵρεσις) originally meant "choice" or "sect." Over time, in the Christian tradition, it came to describe **a school**

of thought that willfully deviated from the apostolic faith (cf. Acts 24:14; Galatians 5:20; 2 Peter 2:1). Heresy wasn't merely false teaching; it was the establishment of an alternative theological system that **subverted the unity of the church, denied the sufficiency of Christ, or fractured the gospel's integrity**.

2.1 The Early Church's Criteria for Heresy

The early church fathers responded to heresy not out of a desire to control thought, but to protect the revelation of God in Christ from distortion. Heresies were evaluated on at least three levels:

1. **Christological Integrity** – Did the teaching affirm Jesus Christ as fully divine and fully human, the sole revelation of the Father, and the fulfillment of God's promises?
2. **Ecclesiological Unity** – Did it maintain the unity of the church as one people of God, regardless of ethnicity, geography, or social class?
3. **Soteriological Coherence** – Did it present the death and resurrection of Jesus as the singular and sufficient basis for salvation?

Teachings that failed these criteria—whether Gnosticism, Arianism, Marcionism, or Donatism—were rejected not because of minor doctrinal variations, but because they

introduced **a rival gospel** (cf. Galatians 1:6–9).

2.2 Heresy as Gospel Subversion

Theologians like **Irenaeus of Lyons** saw heresy as a reshaping of the gospel narrative into a foreign form. In his work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus likens false teachers to those who, using the pieces of a mosaic meant to depict a king, rearrange them to show a fox. They use the same scriptural material, but the resulting image is a deception. Heresy, then, is not always an outright rejection of Scripture—it is often more subtle: **a reconfiguration of the story of God to serve other purposes**.

This is precisely what makes Dispensationalism so dangerous. It retains biblical vocabulary—covenant, Israel, Christ, Kingdom—but arranges the pieces into a theological image that is alien to the New Testament and the early Christian witness. The Christ who tears down the dividing wall (Ephesians 2:14) is replaced with a Christ who reinforces ethnic divisions. The gospel that announces the end of exile and the forgiveness of sins is traded for a vision of final war and ethnic restoration through force.

2.3 The Role of the Creeds

The ecumenical creeds of the church—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and later the

Chalcedonian Definition—were not merely statements of orthodoxy; they were confessions meant to **protect the center of Christian faith: the incarnation, death, resurrection, and lordship of Christ**. These creeds preserve:

- **The oneness of God's people**: "One holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."
- **The centrality of Christ's saving work**: "For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven…"
- **The unity of Scripture through Christ**: the Old and New Testaments bear witness to the same God.

Any system—like Dispensationalism—that **divides God's people into separate plans**, that **replaces the cross with territorial politics**, or that **constructs salvation history around nationalistic ends** is not only uncreedal but **anti-creedal**. It may not deny Christ outright, but it **marginalizes him** in favor of a different center: the modern state of Israel, the "church age," or an apocalyptic timetable.

Conclusion to Section 2

Heresy, then, is not a relic of church history; it is a **present theological reality** whenever the gospel is altered at its foundation. Dispensationalism, as we will now explore in detail, meets the historical and theological criteria for heresy. It distorts the revelation of God in Christ, fragments the unity of God's people, and replaces the cross with empire. It is not simply a divergent interpretation within Christianity—it is **a rival gospel wearing the garments of Scripture**.

3. The Core Doctrines of Dispensationalism: A Different Gospel

Dispensationalism presents itself as a system for organizing biblical history. But beneath its structural claims lies a deeply revisionist theology—one that redefines salvation history, reconfigures the people of God, and centers the Christian hope not on Christ's reign but on geopolitical events. These changes are not cosmetic. They represent a fundamental departure from the gospel of Jesus Christ. This section will examine the **five core doctrinal elements of Dispensationalism** that demonstrate its nature as a distinct and heretical theological system.

3.1 A Divided People of God: Two Plans of Salvation

At the heart of Dispensationalism is the belief that God has two separate peoples: **Israel and the Church**. Israel, in this view, remains God's earthly people with promises tied to land, law, and national destiny. The Church, by contrast, is a "parenthesis" in God's redemptive plan—a temporary detour while Israel is set aside.

This division stands in stark contrast to the testimony of the New Testament, which proclaims that in Christ, **"there is neither Jew nor Greek"** and that God has made "one new man" (Ephesians 2:14–15, NASB2020). The entire narrative of the gospel is about the **breaking down of barriers**, not their reestablishment. Paul insists that the promise to Abraham was always intended for the nations through faith, not ethnicity (Romans 4:13–17; Galatians 3:7–29).

To teach that God now has two peoples with two distinct salvific destinies is not a minor deviation. It undermines the gospel's power to unite the human race in Christ and **resurrects the very divisions the cross was meant to abolish**.

3.2 Literalism Turned Absolutism: A Hermeneutic Without Christ

Dispensationalism insists on a rigid "literal" interpretation of Scripture—especially prophetic passages—except where doing so would challenge its own system. But this literalism, far from being faithful to the text, **refuses to interpret Scripture the way Jesus and the apostles did**.

The early church read the Old Testament **Christologically**. Jesus Himself interpreted the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms as pointing to His suffering, death, and

resurrection (Luke 24:25–27, 44–47). Paul, likewise, read the Abrahamic promise through the lens of Christ, not territorial claims (Galatians 3:16). Hebrews 8–10 reinterprets the temple and priesthood in terms of Christ's once-for-all sacrifice.

Dispensationalism, however, treats prophetic promises to Israel as *perpetual and ethnic*, not fulfilled and universalized in Christ. It denies the apostles' spiritual reading of the Old Testament and **reverts to a carnal reading that demands a rebuilt temple, renewed sacrifices, and territorial restoration**—all of which are explicitly rendered obsolete in the New Testament (Hebrews 10:1–18).

This is not fidelity to Scripture. It is **a hermeneutic that marginalizes Christ**.

3.3 Christ Removed from the Center: The Eclipse of the Cross

Karl Barth insisted that **Jesus Christ is the center of all theology, all Scripture, and all history**. Dispensationalism does not deny Christ, but it **relocates Him**. Instead of being the interpretive key to all Scripture, He becomes a stage in a larger divine program—one chapter among many.

In classic Dispensational charts, Christ's death is placed between "the age of Law" and "the Church age." The cross becomes a kind of **pause**, not the climactic fulfillment of all God's purposes. Worse, the return of Christ is often depicted not as the restoration of all things in Himself (Colossians 1:20), but as the **reestablishment of ethnic Israel, temple sacrifices, and national sovereignty**—goals entirely foreign to the New Testament vision of the Kingdom.

This distortion is theological idolatry. It demotes the cross from the center of time and replaces it with the nation-state. In doing so, it **proclaims another gospel**—a gospel of national identity and divine militarism.

3.4 A Militarized Messiah: The Politics of Prophecy

Perhaps the most dangerous fruit of Dispensationalism is its **apocalyptic nationalism**. Its view of Christ's return is not shaped by the crucified Lamb of Revelation 5, but by a warrior-king who returns to **vindicate ethnic Israel through violence**, destroy her enemies, and reign from a literal throne in Jerusalem.

This vision has produced a prophetic framework that **blesses war, colonization, and**

dispossession, especially when carried out by or on behalf of the modern State of Israel. Christian Zionism, a natural outgrowth of Dispensationalism, offers uncritical support for policies of apartheid, occupation, and ethnic cleansing—justified by an eschatology of conquest.

Moltmann, writing in the shadow of European fascism and nationalist theology, warned that "a messianism that identifies God's reign with military victory is not the Kingdom of God, but a parody of it." The Jesus of the gospels does not return to restore Davidic politics; He returns as the **slaughtered Lamb who alone is worthy to judge and redeem** (Revelation 5:6–10).

Dispensationalism's political theology is not a derivative of the gospel—it is **a betrayal of it**.

3.5 The Parenthesis Church: A Temporary People

Dispensationalism teaches that the Church is not the fulfillment of Israel's promises but an unforeseen interruption. In this scheme, the Church began at Pentecost and will be removed at the Rapture, after which God will resume His dealings with ethnic Israel.

This "parenthesis theory" treats the Church

as **plan B**, relegated to a temporary role. It detaches the Church from the covenants, promises, and identity rooted in God's redemptive plan since Abraham. It also strips the Church of its priestly vocation to bless the nations and bear witness to the crucified Christ.

Scripture teaches the opposite. The Church is "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9), **not because it has replaced Israel**, but because it is **the fulfillment of Israel in Christ**—the true remnant composed of Jew and Gentile together (Romans 11:17–24).

To call the Church a "pause" is to deny its calling and identity. It is to **deny Pentecost itself**.

Conclusion to Section 3

Dispensationalism is not merely an alternate way to read the Bible. It constitutes a **parallel theological system** with its own vision of history, peoplehood, salvation, and divine purpose. It **distorts the gospel**, displaces Christ from the center, and promotes a message of nationalism baptized in eschatology. These are not errors within Christianity; they are **signs of a counterfeit religion**.

4. Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism: The Politics of Heresy

If Dispensationalism is a theological counterfeit, Christian Zionism is its political incarnation. The two are inseparable: Christian Zionism takes the doctrinal framework of Dispensationalism and **translates it into concrete geopolitical allegiance**—to the modern State of Israel, its wars, its claims to land, and its aspirations for religious supremacy. This section will examine how Dispensational theology has birthed a political theology of **perpetual war, racialized election, and eschatological nationalism**—a heresy not only in doctrine but in global consequence.

4.1 The Modern State of Israel as Theological Fulfillment

At the center of Christian Zionism lies the claim that the **founding of the modern State of Israel in 1948** was a **fulfillment of biblical prophecy**. This is not merely political support; it is seen as a divine act, a restoration of God's chosen people to their land.

But the New Testament radically redefines the

meaning of Israel and land:

- In Christ, **the people of God are no longer defined by ethnicity or territory** (Galatians 3:28–29).
- The true inheritance is **not Canaan, but the Kingdom of God**, which belongs to the meek (Matthew 5:5).
- Hebrews 11:13–16 teaches that the patriarchs died **without receiving the land**, because they were looking forward to a **better country—a heavenly one**.

To claim that the modern political entity called Israel fulfills biblical prophecy is to **reject the New Testament's interpretation of the Old**. It substitutes **national sovereignty for resurrection**, **real estate for redemption**.

4.2 Zionism as a Nationalist Project, Not a Redemptive Act

Zionism, in its political form, is a **secular nationalist ideology** that began in the late 19th century. Its aim was to establish a Jewish homeland, not in response to divine command, but as a refuge from European antisemitism. Its founders—Herzl, Weizmann, Ben-Gurion—were mostly secular. Their vision was not of messianic hope, but of **nation-building through land acquisition, military strength, and ethnic**

identity.

Christian Zionism, by baptizing this nationalist project in biblical language, turns the gospel into an engine for colonization. It does not challenge the state's apartheid policies, its occupation of Palestinian land, or its ethnic privileging of Jews. On the contrary, it **theologizes those injustices**.

This is not the prophetic witness of the church; it is **a heretical inversion of the church's calling**—from being a people who bless all nations to a people who bless war in the name of God.

4.3 A Theology of Ethnic Privilege and Religious Supremacy

Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism teach that Jews, as a race, remain **God's chosen people** with a divine right to possess the land—irrespective of their faith in Christ. This has led to a **double covenant theology** in practice, if not in name: one covenant for the church (by grace through faith), another for ethnic Israel (by national inheritance).

This directly contradicts the gospel message:

> "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven…by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NASB2020).

> To uphold two covenants is to **deny the uniqueness and necessity of Christ**. It is to say, in effect, that Jesus is not Lord of all, but Lord of the Gentiles only—a return to the very error Paul fought in Galatia.
>
> This is not merely bad theology. It is **a betrayal of Christ**.

4.4 Political Idolatry and Empire Alignment

Dispensationalism has fused the American evangelical church with Zionist politics, creating a **political religion** in which loyalty to Israel becomes a test of orthodoxy. Churches fly the Israeli flag, political candidates seek endorsement from prophecy pundits, and billions of dollars are funneled to Israeli military interests in the name of divine blessing.

This is not Christianity. It is **political idolatry**.

The church was never called to bless an earthly nation-state, let alone to confuse it with the Kingdom of God. Jesus rebuked the disciples for expecting a national restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6–7) and declared that **His Kingdom is not of this world**(John 18:36). The early Christians **refused allegiance to empire**, even at the cost of their lives. Today's Christian

Zionism reverses that witness—it calls allegiance to empire *faithfulness*, and dissent *heresy*.

It is a reversal of the gospel.

4.5 The Fruits of This Theology: Violence, Injustice, and Apostasy

Jesus said that false prophets are known by their fruit (Matthew 7:15–20). The fruit of Dispensationalism and Christian Zionism includes:

- **Endless war** in the name of prophecy
- **Support for apartheid and occupation**
- **The silencing of Palestinian Christians**
- **The abandonment of global peacemaking**
- **A redefinition of salvation around political events**

This theology bears **the fruit of empire, not the Spirit**. It does not produce justice, mercy, or humility (Micah 6:8); it produces nationalism, arrogance, and spiritual blindness.

Any system that yields such fruit must be judged by the gospel—not excused by it.

Conclusion to Section 4

Christian Zionism is not a neutral political preference. It is the **direct political outgrowth of Dispensational heresy**—a system that rejects the unity of the gospel, the identity of the church, and the Lordship of Christ. It has taken the name of Christ and attached it to a project of ethnic domination and territorial conquest.

It is, in the truest biblical sense, **a form of idolatry and apostasy**.

5. Dispensationalism and the Spirit of Antichrist

If Dispensationalism distorts the gospel and

Christian Zionism corrupts the mission of the church, then we must ask: what spirit is at work in such a theology? The New Testament warns of false teachings that emerge not merely from error but from a **spirit opposed to Christ**—what John calls the *spirit of antichrist* (1 John 4:3).

This section explores how Dispensationalism functions not merely as bad doctrine, but as a **counter-gospel**—a system that imitates the forms of Christianity while denying its substance. It speaks the name of Christ while exalting the values of empire, violence, and division. It is, in effect, a **parody of the faith**, and as such, aligns closely with the very spirit the New Testament warned the church to resist.

5.1 The Marks of the Antichrist in Scripture

Scripture does not depict the "antichrist" as merely a future individual but as a **present spirit**—a theological and political force that:

- **Denies Jesus as the Christ** (1 John 2:22)
- **Denies that Christ came in the flesh** (1 John 4:2–3)
- **Exalts itself above God and takes His place** (2 Thessalonians 2:4)
- **Deceives the nations through false signs and wonders** (Revelation 13)
- **Persecutes the true church and**

seduces it with empire power(Revelation 17)

Dispensationalism, though cloaked in Christian language, **embodies each of these traits**. It rewrites the story of Christ, exalts the nation-state above the Body of Christ, and calls political domination the will of God. It offers a **substitute eschatology, a counterfeit church, and a nationalist messiah**.

5.2 A Christ Without the Cross

At the heart of Dispensationalism is an eschatology that **minimizes the cross** and **glorifies violence**. It teaches that Christ will one day return not to reconcile the world but to **wage war**, destroy His enemies, and establish a **millennial kingdom by force**.

But this is not the Christ revealed in the New Testament. Jesus **disarmed the powers**not by killing but by dying (Colossians 2:15). He triumphed through the cross, not through the sword. Any gospel that removes the cross from the center of God's victory is a **different gospel** (Galatians 1:6–9).

Dispensationalism presents a **messiah of wrath, not redemption**—a figure who resembles the

empires of history more than the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. It turns Christ into Caesar.

5.3 The Church Replaced by Ethnic Israel

Another mark of antichrist is the **denial of the church's identity** as the body of Christ. Dispensationalism splits the people of God into two:

- Ethnic Israel: God's chosen nation, with a future earthly kingdom
- The Church: a temporary parenthesis, to be removed via the rapture

This division is **anti-Pauline, anti-ecclesial, and anti-Christ**. The New Testament declares that in Christ, there is **one new humanity** (Ephesians 2:15), one olive tree (Romans 11), one covenant, one people, one Lord. The church is the **temple of the Spirit**, the **bride of Christ**, and the **agent of reconciliation in the world**.

To say that the church will be removed so God can resume His "real" plan with Israel is to **deny the purpose and presence of Christ in the church today**. It is to render the body of Christ irrelevant.

5.4 A Theology That Loves War and Fears Peace

The spirit of antichrist not only distorts doctrine but **incites violence**. Dispensational eschatology glorifies **Armageddon**, welcomes **Middle East conflict**, and discourages peacemaking because it believes war accelerates prophecy. It conditions believers to **support violence as a divine necessity**.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). But this theology makes peace the enemy of God’s plan. It teaches that **to delay war is to delay Christ’s return**. This is not the gospel. It is a perverse parody of it.

5.5 The Great Deception: A False Hope

Dispensationalism promises escape—not transformation. It tells believers they will be **raptured away** from suffering, rather than called to bear witness in the midst of it. It fosters **escapism over endurance**, comfort over courage, apathy over action.

The early church expected suffering. Paul taught that **through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom** (Acts 14:22). Jesus prayed not that we would be removed from the world, but that we would be faithful within it (John 17:15).

The rapture theology of Dispensationalism

has **lulled the church into passivity** and diverted it from its mission. It offers a false hope—and the New Testament warns that **many will follow false hopes and false Christs** (Matthew 24:24).

Conclusion to Section 5

Dispensationalism is not just a system of interpretation. It is a theology that produces **a different gospel, a different Christ, and a different church**. It bears the hallmarks of the spirit of antichrist: it divides the people of God, glorifies power and war, displaces the cross, and exalts an earthly kingdom over the heavenly one.

To remain silent is to participate in deception. The church must reclaim the gospel from this false religion.

6. Recovering the Gospel of the Kingdom

To refute Dispensationalism is not merely to reject an error—it is to reclaim the **truth of the gospel**. The early church did not believe in a fragmented plan of salvation, a rapture to escape the world, or a return to national Israel. It proclaimed **Jesus Christ as Lord**, not only of the church but of all creation; it proclaimed a **Kingdom that has come**, is coming, and will come in fullness—a **Kingdom not of this world, but for this world**.

This section offers a theological reconstruction: what the church must recover if it is to be faithful in the face of the heresy of Dispensationalism and the political idolatry of Christian Zionism.

6.1 One Covenant, One People, One Hope

The gospel declares that **God's promises to Israel are fulfilled in Christ**, not bypassed. Paul is clear:

> "For all the promises of God find their *yes* in Him" (2 Corinthians 1:20).
>
> The church is not a parenthesis; it is the fulfillment of God's purposes:
>
> - In Christ, there is **no Jew or Gentile**—all are one (Galatians 3:28).
> - The wall of hostility is broken down (Ephesians 2:14).
> - Believers are **children of Abraham** by faith (Galatians 3:7).
> - The church is "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Peter 2:9).
>
> To re-divide what Christ has united is to **undo the gospel itself**. The church must recover its identity as the **one new humanity** in Christ—not as a replacement of Israel, but as its transformation.

6.2 The Kingdom of God: Already and Not Yet

Dispensationalism delays the Kingdom of God until a future millennium. But Jesus declared:

> "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15).

The Kingdom is **already breaking into history**:

- In the healing of the sick (Matthew 11:5)
- In the casting out of demons (Luke 11:20)
- In the gathering of the marginalized (Luke 14:21)
- In the crucified and risen Christ (Philippians 2:6–11)

The Kingdom is **not political domination**, but the reign of God through **justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit** (Romans 14:17). It is inaugurated, not postponed; real, not symbolic. It will be consummated at Christ's return—but it has already begun.

The church is not waiting for the Kingdom. It is **called to embody it**.

6.3 The Cross as the Center of History

The true victory of God is not in the conquest of Jerusalem or the reestablishment of a Jewish state. It is in the **cross and resurrection of Jesus**, where the powers of sin, death, and empire are disarmed.

> "He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through [the cross]" (Colossians 2:15).
>
> The cross is not a detour in God's plan; it is the **climax of the story**. It is where:
> - The curse of the law is broken (Galatians 3:13)
> - Reconciliation is accomplished (2 Corinthians 5:19)
> - The new creation begins (2 Corinthians 5:17)
>
> Any theology that sidelines the cross in favor of political fulfillment is **not Christian theology**.

6.4 The Church as the Body of the King

The church is not an afterthought. It is the **body of Christ**, the **temple of the Holy Spirit**, and the **embassy of the Kingdom**. Wherever the church lives in faith, hope, and love—there the Kingdom is visible.

The church's mission is not to bless nationalism or anticipate rapture. It is to:

- Proclaim the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:15)
- Resist the principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12)
- Suffer in solidarity with the oppressed (Hebrews 13:3)
- Witness to the crucified and risen King (Acts 1:8)

This is what Dispensationalism has stolen from the church: its sense of **purpose in the present**.

6.5 A Theology for the Whole World

Dispensationalism turns salvation into a timeline for insiders. But the gospel is **cosmic in scope**:

"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself…" (2 Corinthians 5:19)
"For God so loved the world…" (John 3:16)
"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord…" (Isaiah 11:9)

The gospel is not about retreating into Zion. It is about the **renewal of all creation**(Romans 8:19–22). The end is not a Jewish state or a Christian empire. The end is **a new heaven and new earth**, where every nation brings its

glory into the City of God (Revelation 21:24).

This is the true hope of the church.

Conclusion to Section 6

The antidote to Dispensationalism is not despair or withdrawal. It is the **rediscovery of the gospel of the Kingdom**—a gospel that unites, reconciles, transforms, and sends. It is the gospel of a crucified Messiah who reigns not through tanks and treaties, but through bread and wine, water and word, Spirit and truth.

The church does not need a new plan. It needs to return to the plan God already gave us in Christ.

7. Conclusion: A Call to Faithfulness

Dispensationalism is not just a theological error. It is a **spiritual counterfeit**—a religion dressed in Christian language but alien to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It teaches a divided people of God, a postponed Kingdom, a nationalized eschatology, and a militant Messiah. It prepares the church not for faithful witness in the world, but for escape from it. It exchanges the cross for the sword, the church for the nation, the Kingdom of God for the empire of man.

This is not Christianity. It is **another gospel**, and as Paul warned, "not that there is another, but there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7, NASB2020).

The church must now decide whether it will follow **Jesus Christ, crucified and risen**, or continue to follow a **Zionized, militarized, politicized distortion** of His name.

7.1 Naming Heresy for What It Is

Throughout the early centuries of the church,

heresy was not merely theological confusion. It was recognized as a **threat to the identity of the church** and to the integrity of the gospel. Arius, Marcion, and others proposed reinterpretations of Christ, Scripture, and the people of God—and were rightly resisted.

Today, Dispensationalism deserves to be named in the same way: not as a "denomination," not as a "tradition," but as a **modern heresy**. It departs from the apostolic witness, rejects the unity of the people of God, and advances a Christ who **returns to kill rather than to heal**, who comes to **restore ethnic nationalism instead of redeeming humanity**.

It is not uncharitable to name this heresy. It is unfaithful not to.

7.2 The Gospel We Must Proclaim Again

In contrast to this false religion, the true gospel proclaims:

- A **crucified Christ**, not a military conqueror
- A **Kingdom that is here**, not delayed for geopolitical drama
- A **church united by faith**, not divided by race or national lineage
- A **mission to the world**, not an escape from it

- A **God who reconciles enemies**, not incites wars for prophecy

This gospel is not safe, not popular, and not useful to empires. But it is the **power of God for salvation** (Romans 1:16).

7.3 A Church Without Borders

The church must repent of its complicity in spreading this heresy. Too long has the evangelical world traded **faithfulness for relevance**, **truth for popularity**, and **Christ for Caesar**.

A faithful church will be:

- **Transnational**, refusing to be owned by any one nation or cause
- **Peace-oriented**, rejecting war as the will of God
- **Prophetic**, calling out injustice and false religion
- **Grounded in Scripture**, interpreted through Christ crucified
- **Rooted in the cross**, not in predictions of Armageddon

This church may not be large. It may not be celebrated. But it will be the **true Body of Christ**—bearing witness in a world addicted

to power.

7.4 A Final Exhortation

Let us no longer pretend that Dispensationalism is just one interpretation among many. It is not. It is a **departure from the gospel**, a **political theology in disguise**, and a **threat to the witness of the church**.

Let us call the church back to:

- The **cross, not the rapture**
- The **Kingdom of God, not the kingdoms of men**
- The **unity of the Spirit, not the division of prophecy charts**
- The **faith of the apostles, not the fantasies of 19th-century theologians**

The time is short. The stakes are high. The gospel is too beautiful to be buried beneath nationalism and war.

Christ is Lord—not America, not Israel, not the empire.

Let the church be the church again.

Appendix: Recognizing the Signs of Dispensationalism in the Church

If we are to guard ourselves and others against this counterfeit gospel, we must be able to recognize it in practice. The danger of Dispensationalism lies not only in its theological systems but in how those systems shape preaching, worship, mission, and community. Below are some marks commonly found in churches that adhere to Dispensational theology. While not every church will display all of these

traits, a consistent pattern should be considered a warning sign of doctrinal distortion:

1. Obsession with End-Times Prophecy

- Frequent focus on the "rapture," the Antichrist, a rebuilt third temple, or a seven-year tribulation.
- Charts, timelines, and "prophecy updates" integrated into regular teaching.
- Scripture treated as a coded map for predicting current events rather than as the living Word revealing Christ.

2. Uncritical Support of Modern Israel

- The modern State of Israel is treated as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, regardless of its political or ethical conduct.
- Sermons or Bible studies regularly link current events in the Middle East to Old Testament promises.
- Christian ethics are suspended in defense of Israeli nationalism.

3. Two Peoples of God Theology

- A strict separation between "Israel" and "the Church," often claiming God has two distinct plans.

- Old Covenant promises to Israel are seen as ongoing and separate from the New Covenant in Christ.
- The Church is often spoken of as a "parenthesis" in God's timeline—temporary and less significant.

4. Hyper-Literal Bible Interpretation

- Apocalyptic literature (e.g., Daniel, Revelation) interpreted with strict literalism, even when genre, symbolism, or historical context suggest otherwise.
- Resistance to Christ-centered or redemptive-historical readings of Scripture.
- Allegory or typology is dismissed as unfaithful or "liberal."

5. Militarized or Politicized Faith

- Strong nationalism blended with theology—often American or Zionist.
- Jesus is portrayed more as a returning warrior than a crucified savior.
- Emphasis on "fighting for truth" often overlaps with political ideologies rather than the fruits of the Spirit.

6. Separationist Ecclesiology

- Heavy emphasis on “coming out from the world,” but in a way that breeds isolation and sectarianism.
- The Church is seen as escaping the world rather than engaging it redemptively.
- Little to no emphasis on social justice, mercy, or the restoration of creation.

7. A God of Contracts, Not Covenant

- God is portrayed as a legalistic figure who keeps separate contracts with different groups.
- Grace is minimized or distorted into a reward for correct theological understanding.
- The gospel becomes a transaction to escape wrath, rather than an invitation into God’s redemptive reign.

8. Visual Red Flags in Dispensational Churches

National Flags in the Sanctuary (Especially American and Israeli)

- An Israeli flag on or near the platform, pulpit, or communion table strongly signals Zionist theology rooted in Dispensationalism.
- An American flag placed on the stage or next to a cross often reflects a fusion of Christian faith with American civil religion—another key trait.
- Dual flag displays (Israel and U.S.) typically indicate Christian Zionism, which is inseparable from Dispensational thinking.

Prophecy Charts, Posters, or Murals

- Timelines of the end times, often with titles like "God's Prophetic Calendar," "Daniel's 70 Weeks," or "The Tribulation Map."
- Artwork showing the rapture, Jesus returning with a sword, or a third temple.
- Visuals depicting the Church Age as a "pause" between Israel's promises—this is classic Dispensationalism on display.

Judaizing Symbols Used Out of Context

- Menorahs, shofars, Torah scrolls, or Hebrew writing prominently displayed without liturgical or historical context.

- Churches that call the sanctuary or stage the “altar of the Lord” and refer to pastors as “priests” while mixing Jewish artifacts are often trying to connect modern worship with Old Covenant ceremonialism, a Dispensational hallmark.
- Some churches even place a replica Ark of the Covenant or a Star of David in worship spaces—these are not historical nods but theological statements.

Banners or Slogans Referencing “Blessing Israel”

- Phrases like: “I will bless those who bless you” (Genesis 12:3), usually removed from Christological context and nationalized.
- Slogans such as “Standing with Israel”, “God’s Chosen People,” or “The Apple of God’s Eye” in signage or bulletins.

Militarized Christian Symbols

- Crosses merged with swords, eagles, or national emblems.
- Imagery of Jesus in warrior pose—sometimes even riding a white horse with an American or Israeli flag.
- Churches that celebrate “Military Appreciation Sundays” or feature armed

forces tributes as central liturgical elements may be signaling a Dispensational view of God's kingdom aligned with worldly power.

Book Tables and Resource Centers

- Books by Hal Lindsey, John Hagee, Tim LaHaye, David Jeremiah, or Charles Ryrie.
- Prominent display of Left Behind materials or DVDs about the rapture.
- Resources heavily promoting end-times prophecy and support for modern Israel as a Christian duty.

Stage Layout and Pulpit Decor

- Pulpits draped in flags or featuring both the cross and Star of David.
- Decorative focus on Jerusalem imagery, temple architecture, or Mount Zion metaphors detached from the Church's identity in Christ.
- Maps of Israel or the Middle East integrated into visual displays or sermon graphics.

A Note of Caution and Discernment:

Not all churches with these visuals are fully Dispensational—but these images are not neutral. They often reflect a deep entanglement of faith with nationalism, legalism, and a distorted eschatology that prioritizes the nation-state of Israel over the global Body of Christ.

If you walk into a church and feel like you're

entering a geopolitical rally rather than a place of worship centered on Christ crucified and risen, trust your discernment.

Churches may not use the term “Dispensational” openly. The language may be cloaked in phrases like “Bible prophecy,” “standing with Israel,” “the rapture of the church,” or “God’s promises to the Jewish people.” These slogans often sound pious but reveal a framework that divides God’s people, misrepresents God’s character, and uproots the gospel from its foundation in Jesus Christ.

If you encounter these signs, be alert. Test the spirit of the church. A true church will center its theology and mission on the crucified and risen Christ, not on geopolitical timelines or ethno-national destinies.

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